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ABSTRACT

This paper draws on two studies to consider theoretical, analytical, ethical, methodological, and representational questions about longitudinal case study research in literacy acquisition. Both studies drew on observations and interviews, as well as formal assessment data. The two longitudinal studies are: "100 Children Go to School: Longitudinal Study from the Year Prior to School to the First Four Years of School"; and "Socio-economically Disadvantaged Students and the Development of Literacies in School: Longitudinal Study." The paper presents observational case study data from both studies which were conducted in several Australian states. Working on these longitudinal studies made the researchers aware of the ways in which they are implicated in producing constitutive discourses about literacy, development, literacy development and children in socio-economically disadvantaged communities. These topics are fraught with controversy, stale and yet still very important to teachers and children's school lives. Some observations are: (1) one outcome of this longitudinal work is the way it complicates children as educational subjects and repositions them as both "agentic" and dynamic; (2) the projects indicate overwhelmingly that what constitutes literacy is changing and there are considerable gaps and differences between the literacies and language practices of schools and home; and (3) while it is helpful to consider the dynamism of young people as students who are subject to change, it is a major dilemma that school literacies and educational futures seem increasingly subject to normative models of assessment and credentialing. (Contains 18 references.) (NKA)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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As part of Symposium 18: Literacy learning longterm: Investigating children's acquisition of school literacies

Chairperson: Barbara Comber

Presenters: Barbara Comber and Helen Nixon, University of South Australia

Joanne Reid, University of New England

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Literacy development and normative fantasies: What can be learnt from watching students over time?

This symposium draws on two studies to consider theoretical, analytical, ethical, methodological and representational questions about longitudinal case study research in literacy acquisition. We have been involved in two large studies of literacy development running simultaneously over a five year period (Comber, Badger, Barnett, Nixon & Pitt, 2001; Hill, Comber, Louden, Reid & Rivalland, 1998; Hill, Comber, Louden, Reid & Rivalland, forthcoming, 2002). Both studies drew on observations and interviews, as well as formal assessment data. The aim of the symposium is to discuss the value of such work, particularly the way it might contribute to questions of social justice and unsettle old versions of 'development' or 'progress'. Yet at the same time we wish to open up the possible perils and examine some of the dilemmas faced by researchers working on longterm contract bases, in relation to both the subjects and the objects of the research.

The two longitudinal studies are:

- 100 children go to school: A longitudinal study from the year prior to school to the first four years of school (hereafter referred to as the *100 children project*)

- Socio-economically disadvantaged students and the development of literacies in school: a longitudinal study (hereafter referred to as *Middle primary literacies project*). (For further information see Comber & Hill, 2001)

The *100 children go to school* (Hill et al., 1998, Hill et al., forthcoming, 2002) project took place in five socio-economically and geographically diverse research sites in three Australian states in two phases. During the first phase we observed and assessed the children in preschool and through their first year of school. In the second phase we followed the same children during their third and fourth years of schooling. We designed the project in such a way that we could follow 20 focus children as part their wider cohorts of peers. The focus children included Aboriginal and ESL children and a number whose families experienced relatively poor or impoverished life conditions. Of the five school sites, three were located in areas of high poverty and two were situated in more affluent areas. This design allowed us to consider children growing up and starting school in vastly different circumstances. The project aimed to explore the connections and disconnections between home and school and the ways in which different children acquired literate practices over an extended period of time.

The second project, *Socio-economically disadvantaged students and the development of literacies in school: A longitudinal study*, also explored how particular children in

particular places acquired literacies at school over time—students who were growing up and going to school in three different low socio-economic communities. The children were in the final term of Year Three at the beginning of the study and in the first term of Year Six when data collection concluded. The research was funded by a grant from the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) and the Australian Research Council (ARC) Strategic Partnership with Industry Research Partners (SPIRT) scheme. Specific goals of the project were:

- to investigate over three years of schooling which literate practices children in socio-economically disadvantaged schools are given access to and practice in;
- to analyze what individual children take from classroom literacy curricula;
- to document and analyze assessment information from sources available in the system, including teachers, students, national and state literacy tests;
- and to better theorize the relationship between the development of student literacies, the provision of literacy curriculum and the assessment of literacy outcomes.

The three schools were all located in areas of significant poverty, though their student populations differed considerably in terms of cultural and linguistic mix. One school was located in a country region. Seven children in each of the three schools were studied closely over the period, in order to see what they did with the literacy curriculum on offer and how they progressed in terms of their own accounts, teachers' reports, observational data and standardised tests. At the beginning of the study these children were all on school card—a recognised indicator of poverty. However as the study proceeded a combination of changes in the funding equation used to calculate school card and changes in circumstances meant that some of the children's families no longer qualified. In only one or two cases however did this signal improved incomes and living conditions.

The longitudinal studies elicit fundamental doubts about discourses of normative literacy development, but also and at the same time raise complex questions concerning unequal outcomes. These studies begin to demonstrate the very great differences in the literacies to which Australian children have access at home and at school and the contrastive ways in which different children take up what is on offer. I begin by discussing the differential effects of schooling on children's literate repertoires identified in the *100 children project* and in particular consider which children get to 'catch up' and under which circumstances. I then turn to the second project to consider the phenomenon identified by the second study, namely that different children are assembling literacies across different axes of practice and at different rates. Both studies raise major questions about what constitutes "normal development". In conclusion I point to some problems of theory and methodology in seeking to understand and represent the ways in which children assemble literacies over time (See also Helen Nixon, "Slow and Steady – Not enough pace!" [NIX01440] and Jo-Anne Reid, "Staying the distance"REI01439].)

Five little boys playing catch-up

At the beginning of the *100 children* study there were already significant differences in the children's dispositions toward literate practices and their ability to perform the literacy assessment tasks. However there were a number of 4 and 5 year old boys from each of the pre-schools who the researchers and their teachers assessed as reluctant to engage with reading and writing and as unable to perform many literacy related tasks that their peers could already do. Campbell (Hillview), Alan (Riverside), Jake (Sweetwater), Sean (The Wattles) and Aston (Gibbs Crossing) were among that group. Yet the stories of these little boys and their literacy trajectories are very different.

For instance in preschool, Campbell scored below the larger cohort in some aspects of literacy, in writing, sight words, book levels and so on. Yet by Year Three he scored above the 90th percentile for reading in the state and at the 75th percentile for reading when compared with other children in his class. Being behind one's peers at Hillview was very different than being behind one's peers at Gibbs Crossing or The Wattles. A combination of factors made it possible for Campbell not only to catch up but excel in some areas. Campbell's escalating progress and comparative re-positioning could be attributed to:

- gradual adjustment to school routines
- strategic repeating of a school year, by changing schools
- responsive diagnostic teaching
- family supplementary literacy instruction
- material literacy resources (personal library & computer)
- social and cultural capital
- the collective belief that he will read and write

Even though some children at Hillview, including Campbell had significant struggles with early literacy learning in comparison with their peers in their context, it was always likely that they would catch up. Indeed Campbell was never not going to catch up and excel; it was always a question of when. In fact, he was never that far behind when compared with children in other places.

In contrast, let us take the case of Alan, who while he made substantial progress in three years of schooling after a slow start, was still somewhat 'behind' his peers. Alan did not sit the Basic Skills Test. His mother was reluctant, the Principal explained, for her children to engage in system-sanctioned activities such as testing. She was suspicious of

the school at times also. Yet she also passionately wanted Alan "to be up with everybody else". The project testing and observations indicated that Alan was clearly making progress in comparison to his earlier efforts, but that his progress was uneven in different aspects of literacy and that his level of performance was still significantly lower than the average for the cohort.

Alan's measurable progress could in part be attributed to:

- gradual adjustment to school routines
- responsive diagnostic teaching
- family supplementary literacy instruction
- his emerging desire to be able to read and write

However his continued relative low positioning raises a number of dilemmas. What would Alan, his family and his teachers need to do in order for him to significantly alter his literacy status? Alan's family were committed to his continual improvement and insisted (as far as this is possible) that he complete his homework, which as his mother pointed out meant her doing it with him and often without full understanding of what was intended. For his part Alan had started to engage in literacy-related tasks, but he simply spent very little self-selected or extended time on literacy related practices out of school. He had not yet learnt to read for pleasure. He did not have a computer at home on which he could search the Internet. He no longer took books home from the school library (as he was banned due to un-returned books) and in Year Three there was no class library. His mother said she was unable to afford fines from the public library for lost or late books. Hence while Alan was now learning from what was on offer at school, it did not compensate for his late start and limited practice. As he grows older and progresses through school we can see that he will need some luck to 'catch up' or even to maintain the gains he has already made.

> Jacob like Campbell and Alan was also reported to make a difficult transition to school life. Dubbed as 'the worst kid in the class' on his first day of school, Jake's alleged badness had more to do with his patterns of behaviour and unclear speech than with any disinterest in school or unwillingness to attend to literacy activities. He was physically and emotionally less mature than his classmates, and he had not had the opportunity at home or in the full-time long-day child care centre where he five days a week, to acquire a habitus that incorporated literacy as part of his being and interacting in the world. All his learning about literacy needed to be done at school— but he was the only child in his class for whom this was the case. He and his siblings, along with his mother, had endured the effects of family breakdown, frequent changes of dwellings and a low household income, and the insecurities associated with this lifestyle afforded Jake little emotional energy to invest in learning to read

and write. There was no 'value added', no pleasure in the recognition of text or familiar language patterns to be gleaned for Jake from the literacy activities in the classroom. He simply went (mechanically, often, because he did not understand what he was doing) through the motions, doing his best to be like the others. He did gain pleasure from working alongside other children, and wanted to be like them, particularly the bigger boys in his non-graded multi-age classroom, where many of the Year 1 boys were eager and successful literacy users.

He was often absent, or late to school, and consequently missed much of the introduction and teacher scaffolding of daily literacy activities. Where the teacher needed to work actively with other children for guided reading, there was no opportunity to assist Jake to make sense of the tasks he was undertaking. His progress was slow, remaining very much below the norm on almost every one of our test items through 1996 and 1997. After his first year at school, Jake was able to repeat his Prep year in a different classroom, moving 'along' if not 'up' a grade! In 1998, the additional time that this provided, accompanied by the additional expertise of a very experienced teacher, provided Jake with a much stronger foundation to enter Year 1. In comparison with our 100 children, his entry cohort, though, Jake's literacy development in 1998 still appears remarkably low, and these results must be read with the knowledge that he is no longer in the same year group at school. In comparison with his actual peers, his achievement was quite satisfactory, and he entered Year 1 with 'below average' results in comparison to those of his new classmates, but he was by no means one of the children experiencing most difficulty.

Sweetwater instituted a Reading Recovery program in 1997, as part of the school emphasis on literacy. Jake was not eligible to enter this program until September of 1999, when those Year 1 children deemed more needy than he was had received the additional instruction and had returned to the class reading at the class average. Jake's test results in Term 3 indicated that he was now among the three lowest achieving children in the class, and he entered the reading recovery program. The results are startling on our testing later that year, when Jake, as a Year 1 child, still scored significantly below the mean on all our Year 2 (Victoria/SA) test items *except* the reading items. Jake has continued to have little literacy support out of school, but in his repeat Prep and Year 1 classes he did have the benefit of careful and well-programmed teaching that allowed him to progress at a rate equivalent to his high-achieving Sweetwater peers. In his 2000 Year 2, year, however, this progress has again slowed, and his entry cohort has far outstripped his performance in reading as well as the other test items on our test results. Such comparisons now, however, mean little, as we have no comparable data on the achievement of Jake's current classmates. (Hill, Comber, Louden, Reid & Rivalland, forthcoming, 2002).

Sean, in different circumstances, had not really made a dent on the literacy ladder and in Year Three he had been suspended from school three times. He had not yet become socialised in school routines; indeed his approach was often both self-destructive and subversive to the classroom ethos. At this point Sean was not taking up what the school had to offer. In fact he often rejected it quite forcefully. His mother sometimes kept him at home when he was in a bad mood. The assessments that Sean was able to complete show some slight progress, but they clearly demonstrate that the gap between Sean and most other children in the cohort is getting substantially wider. Alan was able to do a lot more than Sean for example and we know Alan still had difficulties himself. Sean had access to sympathetic and skilled teaching, but he frequently refused what was on offer, increasingly finding other ways of defining himself as a 'boy in school'. As one researcher put it Sean had a very rich literacy diet but could not digest it. This repertoire of practices did not match with who Sean was, or who he wanted to be.

Sean's lack of measurable progress with school literacies can, in part, be attributed to:

• conflict with behavioural norms of school

• mismatch between gendered identity and school identity

• lack of engagement and practice with school literacies

Aston growing up at Gibbs Crossing, of the five of these boys, was getting the least from school, family and the wider community. His attendance at school was irregular. The teaching staff at Gibbs Crossing experienced numerous changes. Aston's family life was unpredictable to the point of his teachers and family not knowing where he was sleeping. At school the literacy events became less and less connected with Aston's everyday life.

Aston's lack of measurable progress with school literacies can be in part attributed to:

• the irrelevance of school in comparison with other formidable life challenges

• school and school literacies were often presented as white western traditions

• Aston's emotional and physical needs were only intermittently met

• Aston's life interrupted his ability to engage with school practices

These case studies provide potent evidence of how difficult it is for children to overcome or match the advantages of other children who go to school with the cultural capital that allows them to adjust more quickly to literacy learning as an institutional practice or receive the kind of ongoing supplemental unconditional support that really allows some to catch up and flourish while others struggle. Some teachers bent over backwards (such as Eleni with Alan, Ms Mack with Jake) to re-offer literate practices as palatable and in tune with who individual students are. Alan for instance did find a place for himself as a boy in school and began to learn to read and write. However even with this Alan was still

finding school work difficult whether in the classroom or at home. His 'slow start' made a difference in a way that Campbell's did not. It was not that Campbell had significantly greater proficiency with basic literacy as a pre-schooler than did Alan; however Campbell had already accomplished schooled ways with words and a literate disposition prior to his attending to the code-breaking aspects of literate practice. His parents were tertiary educated professionals. His mother was available to him to offer supplementary pedagogy and a rich repertoire of inviting literacy practices beyond those of school.

Children who have access to considerable supplementary educational resources and capital at home can catch up. However a slow start in school literacy combined with difficult living circumstances at home is very difficult to overcome. We did see evidence of some teachers, parents and students making significant inroads into literate practices later in school, but we do not know where they were headed in the longer term and whether they would be able to sustain and even enhance the gains they had made. Clearly some children have access to different opportunities for literacy learning and play at home which make a difference to what they are able to take up and make use of at school. Campbell was always going to learn to read. His engagement and learning from books as a preschooler was already more sustained, satisfying and a part of who he was than Alan's experiences with books in Year Three. They may have both learnt to crack the alphabetic code in Year Two, but Campbell already attended to texts like a reader and a learner, rather than as alien or uncomfortable objects. He already knew how to make them work for him (even if he still needed a parent or teacher to mediate). Other children however who were also late to crack the code had not yet found ways of connecting to text-based forms of pleasure, learning and work. It may be that catching up on the literacy ladder is a privilege reserved for the already advantaged.

Multiple axes of literate practice – What's wrong with development?

The Middle Primary Literacies project looked at what happens after the early years. Given that most children do ultimately achieve code-breaking and basic encoding, it is crucial to consider the literacies which continue to be assembled and practised throughout schooling. Increasingly literacy theorists write of literacies, multi-literacies and/or multiple literacies; we also hear of local literacies, new literacies and vernacular literacies. Despite the demonstrable plurality of literate practices, educational policy more widely and assessment in particular has proceeded as though literacy is a measurable and singular phenomenon subject to a normative universal model of development where learners go through certain stages and end up in roughly at the same mature level of skill. Longitudinal research child studies have contributed to normative developmental theories of literacy learning. However the Middle Primary Literacies study attempted to make this territory strange for us as literacy educators as we took an anthropological and to some degree a cultural studies stance on school literacy learning over time. What if we don't assume development? What if we work with socio-cultural and micro-political approaches to classroom language and literate practices?

In this project we found even within the same classrooms, children were making different literacies from what was on offer to them at school and at home. What is available at school in the same lesson with the same teacher may be very different for different children. Opportunities are not simply there to be taken up. What children bring to an opportunity and do with it is contingent on their repertoires of practices and dispositions. What might present as an opportunity to perform for one child may be a trial to another. To return to the question of development. Not only did we find that children's literate performances are contingent and provisional we found also that unitary models of development are unhelpful in describing children's literacy learning over time. In short children were assembling different literacies even as they sat alongside their peers. To take a very simple example. Around year three or four homework starts to become common. Children are often inducted into diary keeping at this time with the expectation that they can keep records, pass on messages and attend to reminders. This school literacy is a key practice in becoming an 'ideal student'.

This mundane everyday literate practice is designed with the goal of students learning to manage and record themselves for themselves and for the institution. As we observed we noted that one child Jayita took up this practice enthusiastically; her notes were colour-coded; her assessment records were complete and detailed. The diary cover was decorated and covered with protective plastic. This was an artifact that counted and a practice Jayita approached eagerly. Diarising her school life and performance can be seen a 'technology of the self' (Foucault, 1988), a literate practice where the student acquires the discursive resources to evaluate performance, plan for the future and record significant information. However for many children this form of literacy appeared to have less status and appeal. Diaries were lost or at left at home; test results were incomplete; homework assignments were not recorded. Jayita's diary could be seen as a symbol of her relative success at school, but more than that her out of school life had produced a habitus which incorporated record-keeping organisation and management. She came to the diary which much fore-knowledge and needed no persuasion and little training to take it up. Jayita was acquiring a repertoire of literacies which are crucial in many workplaces and learning institutions. As we will see later other children were engaged in quite different forms of literate practices (Nixon, 2001). One of our research team, Jenny Barnett hypothesized that while some children were acquiring 'literacies of replication', other children were being inducted into 'proper literacies' with potential for design, analysis, transformation, new learning. There were qualitatively different literacies being practised. These differences had little to do with maturity or development, but rather more to do with cultural, social and economic capital.

The case studies document what 18 children did with the school literacies on offer over time. To some extent we can see how their prior knowledges and dispositions alter what they engage with and how. We also note students' agency in working and playing with school literacies, rather than simply being passive recipients of curriculum and pedagogy (Dyson, 1993; Honan, Knobel, Baker & Davies, 2000; McCarthey, 1998). We were interested in how difference and which differences impact on children's differential take-up of curriculum opportunities. Yet we are interested also in how different sites make the same children appear different. In other words how do different theories and institutional

sites make different children appear. Helen Nixon will address how different theories of literacy or developmentally appropriate literacies made Joseph look like a different learner, how what constitutes valued practices determines success and failure. The 100 children project indicated that the same child could move from successful to borderline in making the transition from pre-school to school. What counts as literacy or appropriate language and play differs in these educational sites. Grids of progress or development make visible different children, different development. There are two inter-related and over-lapping issues here:

- Within the same classroom in the same school different children are assembling different literacies
- Different theories of development, literacy and literacy development make visible different progress, different kids, different literacies

In terms of the questions framing this symposium where does this leave us? Development obscures differences in children's assembling of literate resources. It asks us to believe that all children with good teaching will 'get there in the end'; meanwhile some children are engaged in literacies beyond those tackled in school and others are working on a diet of recycled basics. Developmentalism is increasingly the subject of critique (see Baker, 1999). Bernadette Baker asks (1999; 798) "Has developmentalism been a dangerous way to think about human life?" and in numerous ways I want to answer yes. Nevertheless as she goes on to demonstrate and debate it is not simply a matter of rejecting developmentalism and replacing it with an alternative. Baker explains:

> This is because a view of developmentalism as something that ought to be moved beyond reinvokes a discourse of progress to which developmentalism has been tied. The role of education as the manager of difference, the means to progress, and the organizer of the future is not necessarily displaced by producing new theories of the child-adult distinction. (Baker, 1999: 825)

As Baker (1999: 828) points out being 'freed from the bondage of development, from a normalized pathway of life, saved by being read by other lenses' does not remove the traps of the discourse. In the middle primary literacies study we tried to avoid simplistic narratives of development and progress, but we did seek to explain change in the repertoires of literate practices students were acquiring and we did look for explanations of what in our view affected children's literacy learning. We argued that a number of factors at school make a difference to what children learn, including:

- the recognition factor (the extent to which what children can do counts and they can see that it counts)
- the resources factor (the extent to which schools have the human and material resources they need)
- the curriculum factor (the quality, scope and depth of what is made available)
- the pedagogical factor (the quality of teacher instructional talk, teacher-student relationships and assessment practices)

- the take-up factor (the extent to which children appropriate literate practices and school authorised discourses)
- the translation factor (the extent to which children can make use of and assemble repertoires of practice which they can use in new situations) (Comber et al. 2001)

It is the relationship between what schools and teachers provide and what students are able to do with that which makes a difference to the literacies children assemble at school. The promise of natural and normal development deflects attention away from close examination of these factors to an internal state within an individual child. While the aim of our work was ethnographic and we sought detailed accounts of everyday practices in actual classrooms we are very much aware that the written case studies of individual children remain selective and partial representations. The written accounts in attempting to make meaning of what we saw foreground patterns of practice and imply a coherent consistent student subject than intended. To conclude I raise several questions about the tendency towards unity and explanatory power in producing case studies.

Conjuring up the literate subject

As numerous literacy researchers have noted while research texts typically tell tales of unitary subjects, feminist and poststructuralist theory points to multiple subjectivities; that is people are constituted in different ways which are historically and socially situated (Comber, 1997; Hicks, 2002; Honan, Knobel, Baker & Davies, 2000; McCarthey, 1998). This means that they are positioned and subjected often in contrastive ways in different cultural events and institutions. It involves, 'reading of a life-in-process' (Honan, Knobel, Baker & Davies, 2000: 18). Even watching the same child in the same classroom provides different visions of that child as student, friend, classmate, leader, comedian, research subject and so on (Dyson, 1993; Honan, Knobel, Baker & Davies, 2000). In addition of course researcher subjectivities and theories produce other stories (Reid, Kamler, Simpson & Maclean, 1996; Honan, Knobel, Baker & Davies, 2000).

In working on these longitudinal studies we are aware of the ways in which we are implicated in producing constitutive discourses about literacy, development, literacy development and children in socio-economically disadvantaged communities. These topics are fraught with controversy, stale and yet still very important to teachers and children's school lives. Whatever our research accounts and social theories, it is individual children who stand to benefit (or not) from what schools make available and it is the school and life trajectories of students growing up in relative poverty in contemporary Australia which interest us. For us then there are important questions here about what this documentary and analytic work does, what we can do with this work in terms of policy and practice. In what ways do our accounts of the literacy development of individual students over time offer a contribution to educational research and practice? What theories offer helpful insights? What dilemmas do the studies produce? What questions do they raise?

Addressing all these questions in detail is more than space will allow here. My colleagues Helen Nixon and JoAnne Reid will illustrate in more depth how these issues had an impact and effects on their work as researchers working longitudinally to document what particular children do with school literacies. However I finish with several observations about 1) students 2) literacy and 3) literacy development and educational futures. Firstly, one outcome of this longitudinal work is the way it complicates children as educational subjects (taking on different identities in different situations) and repositioning them as both agentic and dynamic. In this complexity and among the contradictions are spaces for change. That is, rather than being locked into a stage or pathway or diagnosis what we have are much more complex and at times contradictory young people working more strategically, tactically and responsively in schools and with school literacies than is sometimes assumed (see also Gregory & Williams, 2000; Dyson, 1993).

Secondly, the projects indicate overwhelmingly that what constitutes literacy is changing and that there are considerable gaps and differences between the literacies and language practices of schools and home (Reid, in Hill et al. forthcoming, 2002; see also Carrington & Luke, forthcoming, 2002). Children's repertoires of representational resources, textual practices and knowledges are less and less about what might be deemed to be appropriate literacies for primary aged people. The impact of media, popular culture, ICTs and different ways of family living make the normative model of family literacy, where parents curl up with young children to read a nightly bed-time story a fantasy for many, if not most, children. Increasingly many children's lives are less governed by what schools may see as desirable and more by parents' needs to cope with changing work practices, altered family relations and wider cultural, social and economic shifts. Preparing children for and supporting children with school literacies is considerable, if invisible, work (Dudley-Marling, 2001) which many school educators still mistakenly assume will be forthcoming.

Thirdly, while it is helpful to consider the dynamism of young people as students who are subject to change and while it is important to understand the multiple and changing nature of literate practices outside of school, it is a major dilemma that school literacies and educational futures seem increasingly subject to normative models of assessment and credentialling. On these scales, many of the children we watched are at risk or already seriously failing. As Deborah Hicks (2002) explains this has a particularly negative impact on poor and working-class children's daily struggles within a middle-class educational system. Yet even the middle-classes are not immune as children can be made at risk when their parents' lives are disrupted and they are not able to fulfil the supplementary literate and emotional work that schools appear to count on (Carrington & Luke, forthcoming). Ultimately children come to understand themselves as particular kinds of people with particular kinds of possible lives ahead of them (Reay & Lucey, 2000). Some children see themselves as at risk. Many will self diagnose as ADHD or dyslexic or as not very bright. The problem here is that normative cultures regarding academic achievement and educational trajectories produce 'failures' and produce longterm personal and social effects. Some children are getting goodies (educational and cultural capital) from school (however limited and arbitrary that may be) and others leave with a diagnostic record of failure.

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